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INFO ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE  
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON  
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME  
RUEHKL/AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHINGTON DC  
RHMFIUU/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL

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STATE FOR NEA/PD, NEA/ARP  
INFO NSC FOR ABRAMS, DOD/OSD FOR SCHENKER AND MATHENY  
LONDON FOR ARAB MEDIA OFFICE  
DUBAI FOR PUBLIC DIPLOMACY HUB  
CENTCOM FWD FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [QA](#)  
SUBJECT: AL JAZEERA ENGLISH LAUNCHES - FINALLY

¶1. MORE THAN TWO YEARS AFTER ITS INITIAL CREATION IN 2004, THE ENGLISH-LANGUAGE VERSION OF AL JAZEERA - NOW KNOWN AS AL JAZEERA ENGLISH (AJE) - LAUNCHED TO GREAT FANFARE IN DOHA NOVEMBER 15.

¶2. IN LAUNCHING THIS PROJECT, THE AMIR OF QATAR HAS DISBURSED UNDISCLOSED, BUT UNDOUBTEDLY VAST, SUMS OF MONEY TO MATCH UP AN IMPRESSIVE LINE-UP OF RESPECTED FIGURES IN JOURNALISM WITH CUTTING-EDGE HIGH-DEFINITION TV TECHNOLOGY. BROADCASTING FROM FOUR GEOGRAPHIC CENTERS (DOHA, KUALA LUMPUR, LONDON AND WASHINGTON), AJE BOASTS 20 NEW BUREAUS THROUGHOUT THE WORLD, AS WELL AS FREE ACCESS TO THE EXISTING 42 BUREAUS OF THE AL JAZEERA ARABIC CHANNEL. SOME 30 SEASONED CORRESPONDENTS FROM A WIDE RANGE OF COUNTRIES ARE STAFFING THE NEW BUREAUS.

¶3. THE TWO YEARS PRECEDING AJE'S LAUNCH HAVE BEEN FILLED WITH RUMORS AND SPECULATION CONCERNING BOTH ITS CONTENT AND THE NATURE OF ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE AL JAZEERA ARABIC CHANNEL.

#### THE CONTENT

¶4. THE QUESTION OF CONTENT HAS BEEN ANSWERED IN SMALL PART BY THE FIRST 24 HOURS OF AJE PROGRAMMING. IN FULFILLMENT OF ITS PROMISE TO FACILITATE "THE FLOW OF NEWS FROM SOUTH TO NORTH" AJE FOCUSED ALMOST EXCLUSIVELY ON NEWS FROM THE DEVELOPING WORLD IN ITS FIRST 24 HOURS. ITS FIRST LIVE NEWS BROADCAST FEATURED (IN THIS ORDER) STORIES FROM GAZA, DARFUR, IRAN AND ZIMBABWE, FOLLOWED BY ITEMS FROM SOMALIA, CONGO AND BRAZIL, INTERSPERSED WITH BREAKING NEWS UPDATES ON A TSUNAMI WARNING IN JAPAN. THE NEWS SEGMENTS WERE LONGER IN LENGTH

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THAN IS USUAL ON CABLE NEWS PROGRAMS - AGAIN IN FULFILLMENT OF THE CHANNEL'S PROMISE TO PRESENT NEWS AT A SLOWER, MORE DETAILED AND THOUGHTFUL PACE. OVER THE HOURS, THE FIRST NEWS BROADCAST MOVED FROM DOHA ANCHORS TO ANCHORS IN KUALA LUMPUR, LONDON AND WASHINGTON. NEWS ITEMS ON THE U.S. AND THE UK WERE CONSPICUOUSLY FEW (THE AMERICAS SEGMENT FEATURED A STORY BY FORMER CNN CORRESPONDENT LUCIA NEWMAN FROM BRAZIL).

#### MIDDLE EAST COVERAGE

¶5. THE FIRST STORY ON THE NEW CHANNEL WAS FROM THE GAZA STRIP, FOCUSING ON HAMAS AND ISLAMIC JIHAD ROCKET ATTACKS LAUNCHED INTO ISRAEL FROM THE STRIP AND ON THE RECENT ISRAEL MILITARY ACTION IN

GAZA. THE STORY FEATURED CORRESPONDENTS IN BOTH GAZA AND JERUSALEM; TOGETHER WITH SHOTS OF A BANDAGED BABY GIRL AND GRIEF-STRICKEN PALESTINIAN MOTHERS AND CHILDREN SEARCHING THROUGH RUBBLE. LATER, THE CHANNEL COVERED THE DEATH OF AN ISRAELI WOMAN HIT BY A PALESTINIAN ROCKET AND FEATURED SHOTS OF, AND COMMENTARY FROM, PASSIONATELY ANGRY ISRAELI CITIZENS.

#### THE TERMINOLOGY QUESTION

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¶16. ONE OF THE CENTRAL QUESTIONS OBSERVERS HAVE BEEN POSING WITH REGARD TO AJE IS WHETHER OR NOT IT WILL DISTANCE ITSELF FROM "LOADED" TERMINOLOGY SUCH AS REFERENCES TO "MARTYRS" RATHER THAN "SUICIDE BOMBERS." THIS IS A QUESTION YET TO BE ANSWERED FULLY, ALTHOUGH ON NOVEMBER 16, NEWS OF A RETALIATORY ISRAELI STRIKE ON THE HOUSE OF A PALESTINIAN BELIEVED TO BE LINKED TO THE ROCKET ATTACKS LAUNCHED FROM GAZA WAS FEATURED ON THE BELOW-SCREEN AJE ROLLING TICKER AS "ISRAELI ROCKET HITS FIGHTER'S HOUSE IN GAZA," GIVING THE SENSE THAT AJE TRIED TO FIND A BALANCE BETWEEN LABELING THE INDIVIDUAL A "TERRORIST" AND A "RESISTANCE FIGHTER," BOTH LOADED TERMS DEPENDING ON THE CULTURAL CONTEXT.

#### RIZ KHAN INTERVIEWS ISMAIL HANIYA AND SHIMON PERES

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¶17. RIZ KHAN, THE FORMER CNN ANCHOR, ROLLED OUT HIS NEW SHOW NOVEMBER 16 - "A LIVE INTERACTIVE SHOW LETTING VIEWERS QUESTION WORLD LEADERS, NEWSMAKERS, AND CELEBRITIES, ADDRESSING KEY ISSUES AND TRENDS IMPACTING LIVES AROUND THE GLOBE" - WITH BACK-TO-BACK INTERVIEWS WITH PALESTINIAN PRIME MINISTER ISMAIL HANIYA AND ISRAELI VICE PRIME MINISTER SHIMON PERES, BOTH OF WHOM ANSWERED QUESTIONS FROM KHAN AND QUESTIONS SENT IN BY VIEWERS FROM AROUND THE WORLD.

#### COMING HIGHLIGHTS

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¶18. AJE IS ADVERTISING AN IN-DEPTH SPECIAL PROGRAM PROFILING SYRIAN PRESIDENT BASHIR AL ASSAD AND ANOTHER PROFILING SAMMI AL HAJJ, THE SUDANESE AL JAZEERA CAMERAMAN DETAINED SINCE 2001 IN GUANTANAMO BAY. THE CELEBRATED DAVID FROST INAUGURATES HIS WEEKLY SHOW, "FROST OVER THE WORLD" ON NOVEMBER 17, REPORTEDLY WITH AN INTERVIEW WITH BRITISH PRIME MINISTER TONY BLAIR. THE FULL AJE PROGRAM LINE-UP CAN BE VIEWED AT THE AJE WEBSITE([HTTP://ENGLISH.ALJAZEERA.NET](http://english.aljazeera.net)), RE-LAUNCHED NOVEMBER 15 TO "MATCH THE LOOK AND FEEL" OF THE NEW CHANNEL.

#### ADVERTISING

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¶19. AJE HAS MADE CLEAR THAT IT DOES NOT DEPEND ON ADVERTISING FOR OPERATING REVENUE, AND ITS MANAGING DIRECTOR, NIGEL PARSONS, HAS ACKNOWLEDGED TO POST THAT THERE IS A "POLITICAL" RELUCTANCE BY SOME ADVERTISERS TO SEEK AIR-TIME WITH AL JAZEERA. PRESENTLY ADVERTISING ON AJE ARE ENTITIES SUCH AS NOKIA, ETIHAD AIRLINES, QATAR AIRWAYS, QATAR FINANCIAL CENTER AND DUBAI HOLDINGS.

#### WORLDWIDE DISTRIBUTION

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¶10. ACCORDING TO COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR LINDSEY OLIVER, THE CHANNEL LAUNCHED TO 80 MILLION HOUSEHOLDS VIA CABLE AND SATELLITE. AJE PRESS MATERIALS CLAIM LAUNCH PLATFORMS IN AFGHANISTAN, AUSTRALIA, BELGIUM, BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA, BULGARIA, CROATIA, CYPRUS, DENMARK, ESTONIA, FINLAND, FRANCE, GERMANY, GHANA, GREECE, HONDURAS, HONG KONG, INDONESIA, IRELAND, ISRAEL, ITALY, JORDAN, KENYA, KUWAIT, LATVIA, LEBANON, LITHUANIA, MALAYSIA, MALDIVES, MALTA, MIDDLE EAST, NEW ZEALAND, NORWAY, POLAND, PORTUGAL, QATAR, ROMANIA, SOUTH AFRICA, SPAIN, SWEDEN, SWITZERLAND, THAILAND, THE NETHERLANDS, TURKEY, UNITED ARAB EMIRATES, UNITED KINGDOM, UNITED STATES, AND UGANDA. "IN ADDITION TO CABLE, ADSL, MOBILE PLATFORMS AND SATELLITE, AL JAZEERA ENGLISH WILL BE AVAILABLE AS A LIVE STREAM TO THE ONE BILLION USERS OF THE INTERNET WORLDWIDE," SAID THE PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS.

#### U.S. DISTRIBUTION

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¶11. OLIVER, ECHOING PREVIOUS POST CONVERSATIONS WITH AJE MANAGEMENT, ACKNOWLEDGED DIFFICULTY IN PENETRATING THE U.S. MARKET BUT REMAINED

OPTIMISTIC ABOUT FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES. AT LAUNCH, THE FOLLOWING LIMITED DISSEMINATIONS WERE AVAILABLE IN THE U.S.:

-- GLOBECAST ([WWW.GLOBECAST.COM](http://WWW.GLOBECAST.COM)) A FRENCH-OWNED COMPANY WHICH MANAGES WORLD TV SERVICE, A 200-CHANNEL BOUQUET, FOR THE US MARKET. WORLD TV SERVES AN ESTIMATED 500,000 HOMES IN THE U.S. WHO LARGELY RECEIVE IT DIRECT-TO-HOME FROM INTELSAT.

-- FISION ([HTTP://WWW.FISION.NET/](http://WWW.FISION.NET/)) A HOUSTON-BASED COMPANY PROVIDES 400 DIGITAL TELEVISION CHANNELS TO HOUSTON SUBSCRIBERS.

-- JUMP TV ([HTTPS://WWW.JUMPTV.COM/EN/CHANNEL/ALJAZEERA/](https://WWW.JUMPTV.COM/EN/CHANNEL/ALJAZEERA/)) BILLS ITSELF AS AN "ONLINE TV NETWORK." IT ALREADY OFFERS AL JAZEERA ARABIC AS WEBCAST OVER THE INTERNET.

-- VDC ([WWW.VDC.COM](http://WWW.VDC.COM)) AN INTERNET-STREAMING OPERATION WHICH UTILIZES INTERNET PROTOCOL TELEVISION (IPTV) TECHNOLOGY.

#### POST-LAUNCH -----

¶12. THE ROLL-OUT WAS SLICK AND PROFESSIONAL, WITH AJE STAFFERS EXPRESSING RELIEF AT THE RELATIVELY HITCH-FREE LAUNCH. CHARLOTTE DENT, AJE'S PUBLIC RELATIONS CHIEF, TOLD PAO NOVEMBER 16 THAT THE CHANNEL HAS BEEN "DELUGED" WITH EMAILS FROM INTERNET VIEWERS IN THE U.S. AND CANADA WHO ARE "DISAPPOINTED" AT NOT BEING ABLE TO VIEW AJE PROGRAMMING VIA CABLE OR SATELLITE. DENT SAID COMMERCIAL DIRECTOR LINDSEY OLIVER PLANS A RETURN TRIP TO THE U.S. NEXT MONTH TO RE-CONNECT WITH SATELLITE/CABLE PROVIDERS. "THE RESPONSE HAS BEEN PHENOMENAL, FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD. ONCE U.S. CARRIERS REALIZE WE ARE NOT SUCH A GAMBLE, I THINK THE SITUATION WILL CHANGE," SAID DENT.

¶13. DENT SAID THE MOOD AT AJE NOVEMBER 16 WAS ONE OF "TOTAL ELATION" AFTER A HITCH-FREE LAUNCH. SHE SAID THE CHANNEL IS CURRENTLY AIRING 12 HOURS DAILY OF LIVE NEWS PROGRAMMING (FROM NOON TO MIDNIGHT GMT), WITH THE REMAINING HOURS COVERED BY RECORDED PROGRAMMING AND, WHEN NECESSARY, LIVE BREAKING NEWS UPDATES. SHE SAID THE PROPORTION OF LIVE NEWS PROGRAMMING WILL RISE TO 14, 16, 18 ETC., UNTIL IT REACHES 24 HOURS A DAY, PROBABLY BY THE FIRST QUARTER OF 2007.

#### AJA AND AJE - GETTING ON MUCH BETTER NOW -----

¶14. ONE REMARKABLE TURNAROUND THAT HAS BEEN IN THE MAKING OVER THE LAST SEVERAL MONTHS IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN AL JAZEERA ARABIC AND AJE. INITIALLY HALLMARKED BY DISTRUST AND HOSTILITY, WITH THE AJ ARABIC STAFFERS OPENLY EXPRESSING FEARS THAT THE "WESTERNER-DOMINATED" AJE WOULD HIJACK AND/OR DILUTE THE AL JAZEERA BRAND AND IDENTITY, THE RELATIONSHIP HAS EVOLVED INTO FAMILIARITY AND EVEN SOME COLLEGIALLY. CHATTING WITH AJ ARABIC STAFFERS AT AJ STUDIOS NOVEMBER 15, PAO WAS SURPRISED AT THE WARMTH AND PRIDE IN THE LAUNCH EXPRESSED BY STAFFERS AT THE ARABIC CHANNEL. SIMILARLY, THE TONE AT THE FRIENDS OF AL JAZEERA BLOG ([HTTP://WWW.FRIENDSOFALJAZEERA.ORG](http://WWW.FRIENDSOFALJAZEERA.ORG)), WHICH HAS LONG BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY HOSTILITY AND OFTEN DOWNRIGHT VENOM, ECHOED A SIMILAR SENSE OF COLLEGIALLY AND ACHIEVEMENT AROUND THE LAUNCH. AJE STAFFERS, IN THEIR TURN, ARE CONSISTENTLY CAREFUL TO RECOGNIZE, IN PUBLIC AND IN PRIVATE, THAT AJE IS BUILT "ON THE HERITAGE OF OUR SISTER CHANNEL."

¶15. PART OF THE CAUSE OF THIS TURNAROUND IS UNDOUBTEDLY THE FACT THAT WADAH KHANFAR, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF THE ARABIC CHANNEL, WAS NAMED EARLIER THIS YEAR AS DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE OVERALL AL JAZEERA NETWORK (WHICH NOW INCLUDES AJA, AJE, AJ SPORTS, AJ DIRECT - SORT OF AN ARABIC C-SPAN -, AJ DOCUMENTARY, THE AJ MEDIA TRAINING CENTER AND THE AJ RESEARCH CENTER). KHANFAR'S CONSIDERABLE ENERGIES HAVE SINCE BEEN DIRECTED AT UNIFYING THE TWO CHANNELS, BOTH PHYSICALLY AND CONCEPTUALLY. THE PHYSICAL RELOCATION OF AJE TO THE SAME COMPOUND AS AJA ALSO INCREASED THE STAFFS' FAMILIARITY WITH EACH OTHER AND LED TO REDUCED TENSION.

#### COMMENT -----

¶16. AJE HAS ONLY JUST BEGUN TO PROVE ITSELF, AND THE COMING MONTHS

WILL SHOW WHETHER IT CAN FOLLOW UP THE SUCCESS OF ITS LAUNCH BY BOTH MAINTAINING AND EXPANDING ITS CURRENT ESTIMATED AUDIENCE OF 80 MILLION. A TOO-EXCLUSIVE FOCUS ON NEWS FROM THE "SOUTH" MAY WELL RISK ALIENATING VIEWERS FROM THE "NORTH," AND MALADROIT HANDLING OF "HOT" MIDDLE EAST TOPICS COULD ALIENATE EITHER OR BOTH ARAB AND NON-ARAB AUDIENCES. OTHER QUESTIONS OF KEY INTEREST WILL BE THE EXTENT TO WHICH AJE AND AL JAZEERA ARABIC INFLUENCE EACH OTHER; AND WHERE THAT MUTUAL CYCLE OF INFLUENCE WILL TAKE BOTH THE ENTIRE AL JAZEERA NETWORK AND THE OVERALL PHENOMENON OF MIDDLE-EAST-CENTERED NEWS GENERATION.  
UNTERMEYER